

CABINET

Morecambe Centre Area Action Plan Revision to Local Development Scheme October 7th 2008

Report of Corporate Director (Regeneration)

PURPOSE OF REPORT				
The purpose of the report is to gain Cabinet approval to undertake an Area Action Plan for Morecambe Centre under the terms of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. This will necessitate changes to the Council's Local Development Scheme (the "project plan" for the Local Development Framework). Cabinet approval is also sought to revise the Local Development Scheme for submission to the Government Office for the North West.				
Key Decision	X	Non-Key Decision	Referral from Cabinet Member	
Date Included in Forward Plan	July 2008			
This report is public				

RECOMMENDATIONS OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR (REGENERATION)

That Cabinet:

- (1) Authorises the production of an Area Action Plan for Morecambe Centre in addition to the other Local Development Documents already committed in the Local Development Scheme;
- (2) Instructs the Head of Planning Services to produce a revised Local Development Scheme, including detailed project plans for each document, for consideration at a future cabinet meeting.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Under the terms of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Council is required to prepare and keep up to date various spatial planning documents which together form the "Local Development Framework" (LDF). These documents include the recently adopted Core Strategy, other development plan documents such as the Land Allocations Document, Area Action Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents. The Council must produce a "project plan" for the production of LDF documents which sets out which documents it will produce and, for each one, a description of its purpose and scope together with a timescale for its production. This project plan is called the Local Development Scheme (LDS).

- 1.2 The current Local Development Scheme was adopted in March 2007. It commits the Council to producing the following documents:
- A Core Strategy, (adopted July 2008) setting out the Council's overall vision and strategy;
 - Development Control Policies to guide the processing of planning applications;
 - Land Allocations, indicated on a Proposals Map for housing and employment and land safeguarded from development;
 - Affordable Housing SPD
 - Design/Sustainable Development SPD
 - Lancaster City Centre Spatial Strategy SPD
 - Planning Obligations SPD
- 1.3 The LDS also states that the Council will produce other SPDs as resources permit. The first of these is a central Morecambe and West End Spatial Strategy SPD.
- 1.4 Following the introduction of new regulations by the Government in September 2008, (designed to streamline the “new” development plan system), it is now necessary to revise the Local Development Scheme. This provides the Council with the opportunity to review its priorities in the light of current circumstances and resources together with the benefit of experience gained during production of the Core Strategy.
- 1.5 This report recommends a number of changes to the Local Development Scheme for the reasons described below. The main proposed change (other than revising timescales for existing documents) is the production of an Area Action Plan for Morecambe Centre.

2.0 Proposal Details

- 2.1 This report deals with two inter-related issues i.e. the rationale behind the proposed Morecambe Centre Area Action Plan and the revised Local development Scheme.

Area Action Plans

- 2.2 Unlike SPDs, area action plans are “development plan” documents. This means they undergo an Independent Examination by a Planning Inspector on behalf of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. Once adopted, they are the main consideration when determining planning applications. Government guidance (Planning Policy Statement 12) states that area action plans should be used where there is a need to provide the planning framework for areas where significant change or conservation is needed. Area action plans should:
- Deliver planned growth areas;
 - Stimulate regeneration;
 - Protect areas particularly sensitive to change;
 - Resolve conflicting objectives in areas subject to development pressure; or
 - Focus the delivery of area based regeneration initiatives.
- 2.3 PPS 12, which was published in June 2008, also advises that area action plans can assist in producing a consensus as to the right strategy for an area and how it may be implemented. They can also assist in providing the basis for taking compulsory purchase action where necessary or act as a focus and a catalyst for getting several key agencies and landowners to work together. In areas of change, area action plans should identify the distribution of uses and their inter-relationships, including specific land allocations.

- 2.4 The guidance in PPS12 is different from that contained in its predecessor, particularly in terms of the reference to possibly use of compulsory purchase powers. It appears from the guidance that if a Council wishes to promote significant physical change that would change land uses in an area and wishes to underpin this with the possible use of compulsory purchase powers, then this requires an area action plan to provide the policy base.

Possible Morecambe Centre Area Action Plan

- 2.5 Morecambe is the Council's regeneration priority. It is also regionally important and a priority of the Community Strategy and Lancaster and Morecambe Vision. The recently adopted Core Strategy identifies Central Morecambe as a Regeneration Priority Area of sub-regional importance. Policy ER2 states that: "*Through tourism, housing renewal and heritage led regeneration, central Morecambe will be re-invented as a visitor destination drawing on its natural and built heritage, and as an office and service centre with restored historic townscape and a revived housing market*".
- 2.6 Given this priority, it is considered that the Council should take immediate steps to build upon the Morecambe's current positive image provided by the opening of the Midland Hotel and promote further and more extensive regeneration in central Morecambe. A first and key stage in the process would be the production of an area action plan. This would underpin and complement other initiatives in the area and provide a detailed spatial planning framework for the area.
- 2.7 The Plan would build upon recent initiatives, particularly those in Poulton and the West End, and set out specific measures for promoting sustainable development that would help bring these communities together. Critically, the Plan would be a major tool in assisting bids for external funding and in maximising the benefits to the local community from development proposals. It would provide certainty to those wishing to invest in central Morecambe and promote confidence in the area.
- 2.8 Following approval of a detailed project plan, there would be a number of key stages to be undertaken including:
- Defining and agreeing the purpose and scope of the plan and its physical extent (it is currently envisaged that the plan would broadly cover the central area from the former Frontierland Site through to Queen Street and inland as far as the Euston Road/Central Drive junction);
 - Identifying the key issues, evaluating realistic options and deciding upon delivery mechanisms;
 - Submitting the preferred option(s) to independent examination;
 - Formal adoption.
- 2.9 Each stage up to adoption would involve extensive public and stakeholder engagement (possibly utilising techniques such as planning for real exercises), ongoing sustainability appraisal and detailed negotiations with potential funders and delivery partners. Cabinet should note that there is likely to be considerable public interest in the Area Action Plan and public engagement will need to be handled carefully and be properly resourced.
- 2.10 If Cabinet approves the preparation of the Area Action Plan, a detailed project plan will be produced in conjunction with the Planning Policy Cabinet Liaison Group.

Revised Local Development Scheme

- 2.11 in September 2008 the Government introduced new regulations designed to streamline the “new” development plan system. As a result, it is now necessary to revise the Local Development Scheme (the LDF “project plan”) (LDS). This provides the Council with the opportunity to review its priorities in the light of current circumstances and with the benefit of experience gained during production of the Core Strategy. It also enables the Council to incorporate any decision taken on the Morecambe Centre Area Action Plan.
- 2.12 Any changes to the LDS must be submitted to the Government Office for the North West for approval.
- 2.13 As mentioned earlier, following the adoption of the Core Strategy, the Council is currently committed to producing Land Allocations and Development Control Policies development plan documents. In addition, supplementary planning documents on Affordable Housing, Design/Sustainable Development, Planning Obligations and a Lancaster City Centre Spatial Strategy are also programmed in the LDS.
- 2.14 It is considered of the utmost importance that the Council produces the Land Allocations and Development Control Policies development plan document as quickly as possible. These are the key documents for developing the general principles of the Core Strategy into specific policies and proposals. The land allocations document will be particularly important in determining how and where future development needs (such as for housing and employment) will be met and in deciding which areas will be protected from development. The Development Control Policies development plan will contain policies for key areas such affordable housing, climate change and planning obligations. Whilst also important, there is more flexibility to produce supplementary planning documents as priorities dictate and resources allow.
- 2.15 Producing three development plan documents at the same time will require the Council to re-examine the resources currently targeted at spatial planning. It is recommended that once Cabinet decides which documents it wishes to produce, the Head of Planning Services be requested to draw up detailed project plans for each documents. These will identify the resources required to deliver the revised Local Development Scheme, the implications of which can then be considered at a future Cabinet meeting.

3.0 Details of Consultation

- 3.1 It is a statutory requirement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to undertake comprehensive stakeholder and public engagement for all Local Development Framework documents. The precise form of this engagement will vary depending upon the type of document being prepared but will in all cases at the least meet the requirements set out in the Council’s adopted Statement of Community Involvement.

4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

- 4.1 Option 1 – Produce only those documents contained in the existing Local Development Scheme, albeit to revised timetables. This would increase the potential of being able to produce the Land Allocations and Development Control Policies documents within a reasonable timescale and within existing resource availability.

Option 2 - Produce those documents contained in the existing Local Development Scheme, albeit to revised timetables, in addition to the Morecambe Centre Area Action Plan. This would retain the ability to produce the Land Allocations and Development Control Policies documents within a reasonable timescale whilst also producing the Area Action Plan. This, however, would require extra resources to be directed to the Council's plan making function.

Option 3 – Prioritise the Morecambe Centre Action Area Plan and delay production of other LDF documents. This would increase the likelihood of being able to produce the Area Action plan within a reasonable timescale and within existing resource availability but would delay other key documents which would undermine the Council's Planning Framework, create uncertainty in the development industry and in the minds of the public. This option may also prejudice bids for external funding and future Housing and Planning Delivery grant settlements.

5.0 Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

5.1 Option 2 is the officer preferred option as this would ensure an up-to-date planning framework which would help maximise the potential to promote the sustainable regeneration of the District whilst making a significant step in promoting the Council's regeneration priority of central Morecambe.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 The need to revise the Local Development Scheme provides the opportunity to re-examine the Council's priorities in terms of spatial planning and address the Council's main regeneration priority of central Morecambe. It is recommended that Cabinet take this opportunity.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

Once adopted, Local Development Framework documents become part of the Council's policy framework. All future LDF documents must build upon and complement the recently adopted Core Strategy, which is part of the Policy Framework.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

All Local Development Framework documents undertake a thorough and robust process of sustainability appraisal (a statutory requirement). Diversity, Human Rights and Community Safety and Rural Proofing issues are fully taken into account during document preparation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report. Once Cabinet has agreed which LDF documents it wishes to produce and when, detailed project plans will be developed setting out any resource implications. At this stage, it is envisaged that resources will be available from existing budgets and, if necessary, from current and future Housing and Planning Delivery Grant (H&PDG) settlements (which are now based largely on progress on LDF documents). The use of current and future years' H&PDG will be the subject of a separate report by the Head of Planning Services to a future Cabinet meeting,

therefore no financial or contractual commitment will be entered into using H&PDG until Members have agreed how it should be allocated.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The s151 Officer has been consulted & has no comments to add

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Producing Local Development Framework documents is a statutory requirement governed by the relevant legislation and regulations. All development plan documents are subject to independent examination which, amongst other things, tests whether the statutory requirements have been complied with.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted, and would advise that the Area Action Plan, and Land Allocations and Development Control policies will, in accordance with legal requirements and the Council's Constitution, ultimately be considered and adopted by full Council.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Lancaster District Local Development Scheme March 2007
Planning Policy Statement 12 – Local Spatial Planning (2008)
Lancaster District Core Strategy – Adopted July 2008

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